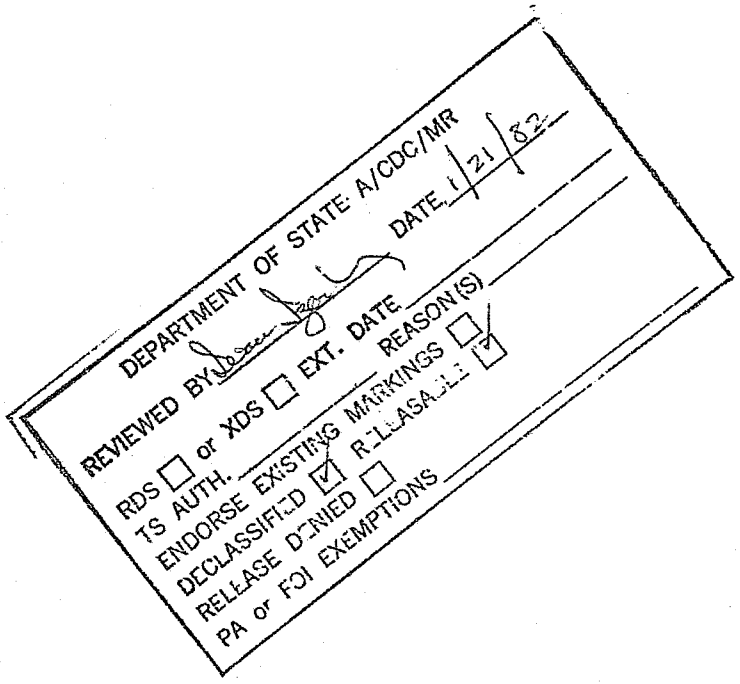
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EFFORT TO MOVE TOWARD DIRECT TALKS WITH HANOI, PERHAPS OPENING OUR DISCUSSION BY SOME CONSIDERATION OF THE RECENT LOWER HOUSE DISCUSSION OF CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ASSEMBLIES OF NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM. WHILE SUCH EFFORTS SEEM UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED JUST NOW, THEY COULD SERVE TO DEMONSTRATE GVN FLEXIBILITY AND GOOD WILL. (THIEU HAS ALREADY ENDORSED THE LH AIR, AND HE MIGHT BE WILLING TO UNDERLINE IT AGAIN IN A SPEECH, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH WOULD APPEAL TO HANOI TO OPEN DIRECT TALKS.)

3. WE ALSO AGREE WITH THE REFTEL SUGGESTION THAT WE STRESS TO THE GVN THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR THINKING THROUGH AND ELABORATING ON HOW THE HONOLULU REFERENCES TO THE "ONE MAN, ONE VOTE" FORMULA AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR "INDIVIDUALS AND MEMBERS OF GROUPS" WOULD ULTIMATELY BE IMPLEMENTED. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT, IN EARLIER CONSULTATION SESSIONS, THE GVN SIDE EXPRESSED A READINESS TO LIVE WITH A SITUATION IN WHICH THE NLF MIGHT HAVE 20-25 SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY AND THAT THEY AGREED WITH MY POINT THAT, AS MORE TERRITORY COMES UNDER GVN CONTROL, ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD FOR HAMLET AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS AND DEPUTIES IN WHICH FORMER NLF MEMBERS WHO RENOUNCE VIOLENCE AND ACCEPT THE CONSTITUTION COULD PARTICIPATE.

4. IN OUR AUGUST 16 SESSION WITH THE GVN, USING THE HONOLULU COMMUNIQUE AND OUR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE, WE MIGHT OUTLINE SOME OF THE ALTERNATIVES PROPOSED IN THE DEPARTMENT'S MESSAGE AS POSSIBLE LINES FOR EXPLORATION. WE WOULD PRESENT THESE AS FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND SOLICIT GVN VIEWS, PERHAPS TO INCLUDE A WORKING PAPER FOR DISCUSSION AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING.

5. AS REGARDS THE SPECIFIC ELECTION INITIATIVES WHICH REFTEL OUTLINES, I DO NOT THINK THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR ANY PUBLIC OFFER OF ELECTIONS IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE. IN DISCUSSING SUCH ELECTIONS WITH THE GVN, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT WE ARE CONSIDERING SUCH ELECTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FUTURE SETTLEMENT, NOT IN TERMS OF A PUBLIC INITIATIVE BY THE GVN AT THIS TIME. WHILE A GVN ELECTIONS INITIATIVE NOW WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A FAVORABLE IMPACT ON W OPINION, IT WOULD ALSO DEPRIVE THE GVN OF ONE OF ITS PRINCIPAL BARGAINING POINTS BEFORE SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDER WA TO ALLOW COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IS CERTAINLY A MAJOR

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CONCESSION. BOTH THIEU AND KY HAVE PRIVATELY INDICATED THAT THEY ARE ULTIMATELY WILLING TO MAKE THAT CONCESSION, BUT IT IS MY IMPRESSION THAT THEY WOULD BE MOST UNWILLING--AND ALSO IT WOULD BE QUITE UNWISE--TO MAKE THAT CONCESSION IN ADVANCE WITH NO ASSURANCE OF ANY QUID PRO QUO.

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6. REFTEL ALSO SEEMS TO ENVISAGE THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME SORT OF UNILATERAL GVN IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH AN INITIATIVE. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW COMMUNISTS COULD BE PERMITTED TO RUN FOR OFFICE WHILE THE WAR CONTINUES. THE LINE BETWEEN ELECTION CAMPAIGNING AND ENEMY SUBVERSION WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DRAW. IN THE CASE OF VILLAGE/HAMLET ELECTIONS, THE GVN WOULD MOST LIKELY FIND ITSELF IN THE POSITION OF RECOGNIZING A GOODLY NUMBER OF ENEMY "ADMINISTRATIONS" (LATEST HES ESTIMATE IS THAT THE COMMUNISTS CONTROL 38.3 PERCENT OF THE RURAL POPULATION). I THINK SUCH A SITUATION COULD DESTROY NATIONALIST MORALE. IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER SETTLEMENT ARRANGEMENTS SUCH AS A CEASEFIRE WITH GVN ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF SVN TERRITORY, THE RETURN NORTH OF NVN FORCES, AND SOME FORM OF INTERNATIONAL CONTROL, VILLAGE/HAMLET ELECTIONS WITH COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION NEED NOT RESULT IN ANY GREAT DAMAGE. HOWEVER, BEFORE SUCH ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN FORCE THE OUTCOME (AS REFTEL NOTES) WOULD BE DEFACTO PARTITION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.

7. IN ADDITION TO THE TACTICAL NEGOTIATING CONSIDERATIONS AGAINST THE SPECIFIC ELECTIONS INITIATIVE SUGGESTED REFTEL, THERE IS ALSO A STRONG LOCAL POLITICAL REASON FOR AVOIDING IT NOW. HUONG HAS BEEN UNDER HEAVY ATTACK BY HIS OPPONENTS FOR HIS ALLEGED SOFTNESS ON THE NLF. THE HARD LINE UTTERANCES AND SUPPRESSIVE MOVES WHICH HAVE CREATED AN UNFAVORABLE IMAGE ABROAD IN RECENT WEEKS WERE MOTIVATED LARGELY BY THE NEED TO CUT THE GROUND FROM UNDER THE MILITATNT OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THIEU AND HUONG TO PROPOSE IN PUBLIC AT

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THIS TIME THAT THE COMMUNISTS BE ALLOWED TO PUT FORWARD CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE BEFORE AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT IS REACHED.

8. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN PREPARING PUBLIC OPINION FOR SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, HOWEVER. THE IDEA IS IN FACT BEING DISCUSSED VERY OFTEN IN POLITICAL CIRCLES. AS THIEU TOLD ME RECENTLY, SIX MONTHS AGO IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO USE THE WORD NEGOTIATIONS IN A PUBLIC DISCUSSION, AND A COMPLETE MILITARY VICTORY WAS THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. NOW THE PROSPECTS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC. GIVEN MORE TIME -- AND ABOVE ALL, GIVEN VIETNAMESE PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS LOOKING TO A SETTLEMENT -- I THINK THERE IS NO BOUBT THAT VIETNAMESE PUBLIC OPINION WILL BE READY TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT COMMUNISTS WHO RENOUNCE VIOLENCE AND ACCEPT THE CONSTITUTION CAN RUN FOR ELECTION.

9. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME MEASURES OF WISDOM IN PRESSING, AT LEAST AS A TACTICAL NEGOTIATING MEASURE, FOR ELECTIONS IN NORTH VIET NAM, AS WELL AS IN SOUTH VIET NAM. OTHERWISE WE WILL BE IMPLICITLY ACCEPTING THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST DICTUM OF "WHAT'S MINE IS MINE, WHAT'S YOURS IS NEGOTIABLE." THE COMMUNISTS WOULD NEVER AGREE TO ANY OPENING OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NORTH VIET NAM. THE RECENTLY PROCLAIMED, INTENSIFIED SECURITY MEASURES IN NORTH VIET NAM SUGGEST THAT COMMUNIST CONTROL MAY NOT BE AS COMPLETE AS MIGHT BE SUPPOSED. THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OF 1954, WHICH CONTAINS A REFERENCE TO ELECTIONS, REFERS TO "FREE GENERAL ELECTIONS BY SECRET BALLOT" THROUGHOUT VIET NAM. (IN THIS CONNECTION WE HAVE READ WITH INTEREST IN INR STUDY ON ELECTIONS IN VIET NAM - IR 6818 OF FEBRUARY 1955.) AT A MINIMUM, A PROPOSAL FOR ELECTIONS IN NORTH VIET NAM IS A POSITION WHICH COULD BE TRADED AWAY AT SOME POINT.

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